



# THE RED SHOES

UK | 1948 | 133m | U

**Director:** Michael Powell, Emeric Pressburger

**Screenplay:** Emeric Pressburger, Michael Powell

**Cinematography:** Jack Cardiff

**Editing:** Reginald Mills

**Original Music:** Brian Easdale

**Leading Players:** Moira Shearer, Anton Walbrook, Marius Goring, Leonide Massine, Robert Helpmann



**BFF Patron Thelma Schoonmaker will be our guest of honour at this gala event and will take audience questions following the screening.**

Deservedly given the full red carpet treatment at this year's Cannes, *The Red Shoes* returns in all its Technicolor glory thanks to two of the film's most illustrious devotees Martin Scorsese and Thelma Schoonmaker not to mention Robert Gitt, Preservation Officer at the UCLA Film & Television Archive, who spent two and a half years supervising a painstaking restoration of this landmark British film.

The restoration of *The Red Shoes* came about when Thelma Schoonmaker, Scorsese's editor and Michael Powell's widow, tried to buy Scorsese a print of Powell and Pressburger's *The Life and Death of Colonel Blimp* for his 60th birthday. She was alarmed to find the printing negative was damaged, and that there wasn't enough money to restore it. With funding finally secured (mainly from the Hollywood Foreign Press Association) it was the Film Foundation, the preservation organisation headed by Scorsese, which decided to restore the film with the help of UCLA and an army of retouchers in India. Gitt, along with Barbara Whitehead, assistant film preservationist at UCLA, had to make a high-resolution scan of every frame of film, 578,880 frames in the tripartite negative to be precise, and remove digitally any individual signs of dirt, mould or shrinkage; a mammoth and costly task equivalent to the restoration of a Vermeer or Caravaggio painting combined.

Based on a Hans Christian Andersen fairy tale, *The Red Shoes*, tells the story of ballerina Vicky Page (played by the radiant Moira Shearer) torn between sacrificing her life to dance and the demands of her impresario Lermontov (Anton Walbrook) or to love and domestic family life with husband and composer Julian (Marius Goring). It is her red ballet shoes which determine her choice. 'Why do you want to dance?' Lemontov asks Vicky, 'Why do you want to live?' replies Vicky.

TONIGHT'S SCREENING SPONSORED BY THE NORIE TRUST

what did you think of the film? please mark or tear your vote ▶ excellent A

please add further comments about the film or the festival here

- B
- fair C
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*The Red Shoes* is one of Martin Scorsese's favourite films of all time, his love of the "movie that plays in my heart" began when aged nine his father took him to see the film at the Brooklyn Academy of Music. As Scorsese recounts:

"This was something unique, especially served up in such a beautifully made and crafted way. I don't think my father understood the impact the film had on me at the time until years later, when he met Michael Powell. We all became sort of a family, my mother and father and Powell." (*The Independent* 15 May 2009)

Over the last 30 years or more Scorsese has been responsible for restoring the reputation of Powell and Pressburger as the best directing and writing team British cinema ever produced. Custodian of their legacy, Scorsese admired Powell and Pressburger for their auteur approach to film-making, the establishment of their Archers production company, demanding complete creative freedom at the peak of studio control. "We look at that remarkable title card that says "Written, Produced and Directed By" and we realise that one couldn't do without the other" says Scorsese.

*The Red Shoes* is also a testament to Hein Heckroth's incredible art direction and the virtuosity of Jack Cardiff's Technicolor camerawork. Cardiff who sadly died this year at the age of 94 is universally considered one of the greatest cinematographers of all time. Therefore, it is very heartwarming to hear that other Powell & Pressburger films are now in line for restoration. Who could forget the thrill of watching a feverish Sister Ruth (Kathleen Byron) defy her superiors and apply red lipstick in *Black Narcissus* or one of June's (Kim Hunter) tears caught on the petals of a rose in *A Matter of Life and Death* - cinematic moments ready to inspire generations of filmmakers to come.

We are delighted to have Thelma Schoonmaker, widow of Michael Powell and BFF Patron at the screening to discuss the film and its major restoration.

**BFF Film Note by Victoria Trachy**

### **Tomorrow at Bath Film Festival 2009...**

Friday 20 November, 9.00pm | Little Theatre | £7 / £5

#### **Birdwatchers / La terra degli uomini rossi**

Marco Bechis | Italy, Brazil | 108m | 15 | sub-titles

Pared down to the point of feeling like a documentary (perhaps by Herzog), this strikingly photographed film presents the bald injustice of the plight of Brazil's Guanari people, and the story of one group's bid to reclaim their land, without dwelling on the subtleties. The title refers to the rich tourists who ply the river, satisfied only if they spot, as well as the birdlife, typical examples of indigenous people on the riverbank. A haunting film of forceful eloquence.

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